

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2845

---

### As Reported by House Committee On: Local Government

**Title:** An act relating to providing water for residential fire sprinkler suppression systems.

**Brief Description:** Regulating water availability for residential fire sprinkler suppression systems.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Simpson and Curtis.

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Local Government: 1/25/06, 2/2/06 [DPS].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Prohibits a county water system, municipal water system or water district from imposing certain charges and assessments on a residential property owner or fire sprinkler system contractor due to increased water capacity needs stemming from the installation of a residential fire sprinkler suppression system.
- Requires a municipal water system or water district supplying water to a residential fire sprinkler suppression system to provide the water through a single metered connection that must be of sufficient size to adequately supply water for both domestic and fire suppression purposes.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Clibborn, Vice Chair; Schindler, Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; B. Sullivan, Takko and Woods.

**Staff:** Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

#### **Background:**

Within their respective jurisdictions, counties, cities, towns, and water districts are all authorized to provide residential water service. Generally, the rate charged for the provision of water service is directly proportional to the amount of water actually used by the consumer. However, some water service providers add charges for the maintenance of

additional water service *capacity* where such enhanced capacity is necessary for the proper operation of a fire suppression sprinkler system. In some cases the water system connecting to a building or home must have flow and pressure capabilities exceeding normal parameters so as to ensure the optimal operation of the sprinkler system in the event it is activated. Accordingly, there are water service providers that impose extra charges to compensate for the maintenance of this extra capacity, whether or not it is actually used.

---

**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

A municipal water system or water district is prohibited from charging a residential property owner or a residential fire sprinkler system contractor with additional meter charges due to an increase in the water supply that must be made available to service a built-in automatic residential fire sprinkler suppression system. Residences with such fire sprinkler systems must be charged under standard residential pricing schedules based upon the actual water used and cannot be assessed additional charges based upon the mere availability of an increased water supply.

A municipal water system or water district is prohibited from imposing water system development assessments upon a property owner or fire sprinkler system contractor based upon the installation of a built-in automatic residential fire sprinkler suppression system.

In supplying water to a residence with a built-in automatic residential fire sprinkler suppression system, a municipal water system or water district must provide the water through a single metered connection that must be of sufficient size to adequately supply water for both domestic and fire suppression purposes.

Prohibits water supply systems within the jurisdiction of counties and municipalities from imposing charges on residential customers for available but unused water service with respect to connections installed for built-in automatic fire sprinkler suppression systems.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

Corrects typographical errors and makes technical revisions to clarify the provisions of the bill.

Adds new Sections 4 and 5 to the bill which are substantively identical to Section 3, except that these new sections are applicable to cities/towns and code cities, whereas Section 3 applies only to counties. These sections prohibit local governments from imposing additional charges on residential water customers for the extra water supply *capacity* needed for built-in automatic fire sprinkler suppression systems.

---

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** Residential fire suppression sprinkler systems are expensive to install and maintain. Many public water systems impose extra charges to simply maintain the extra water supply capacity necessary for residential sprinkler systems. These charges are unfair. Homeowners should only be charged for the water actually used and should not be forced to shoulder the burden of paying for mere "capacity." This bill would prohibit these unfair charges and make it more affordable for homeowners to install sprinkler systems. Such systems should be encouraged because they save lives and prevent property losses.

(With concerns) The language of the bill is confused and needs clarification. It is difficult to tell exactly what the bill is requiring. Cities commonly impose "capacity" charges and some have charges related to water "surges."

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Simpson, prime sponsor; Rick Jensen and Paul O'Connor, Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, Puget Sound; and Anjela Foster, Washington State Patrol, State Fire Marshal.

(With concerns) Dave Williams, Association of Washington Cities.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.